



Unity Schools Trust

'Excellence through collaboration'

Freedom of Information (FOI) Policy and Publication Scheme

Policy Reviewed:	November 2019
Next Review:	November 2022
Approved by Trust	December 2019

Freedom of Information

The Trust is subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOI) as a public authority and as such must comply with any requests for information in accordance with the principles laid out in the Act.

Any request for information from the Trust is technically a request under the FOI, whether or not the individual making the request mentions the FOI. However, the ICO has stated that routine requests for information (such as a parent requesting a copy of a policy) can be dealt with outside of the provisions of the Act.

In all non-routine cases, if the request is simple and the information is to be released, then the individual who received the request can release the information, but must ensure that this is done within the timescale set out below. A copy of the request and response should then be sent to the Business Director & Chief Financial Officer.

All other requests should be referred in the first instance to the Business Director & Chief Financial Officer, who may allocate another individual to deal with the request. This must be done promptly, and in any event within three working days of receiving the request.

When considering a request under FOI, it should be borne in mind that release under FOI is treated as release to the general public, and so once it has been released to an individual, anyone can then access it, and you cannot restrict access when releasing by marking the information “confidential” or “restricted”.

The Trust must respond as soon as possible, and in any event, within twenty working days of the date of receipt of the request. For the Trust, a “working day” when calculating the twenty working day deadline is a school day (one in which students are in attendance), subject to an absolute maximum of sixty normal working days (not school days) to respond.

Any questions about the Freedom of Rights in this policy should be directed in the first instance to the data protection officer (DPO) on dataprotection@unityschoolstrust.co.uk.

Procedure for Dealing with a Freedom of Information Request

When a request is received that cannot be dealt with by simply providing the information, it should be referred in the first instance to the Business Director & Chief Financial Officer, who may re-allocate to an individual with responsibility for the type of information requested.

1.1 The first stage in responding is to determine whether or not the Trust “holds” the information requested. The Trust will hold the information if it exists in computer or paper format. Some requests will require the Trust to take information from different sources and manipulate it in some way. Where this would take minimal effort, the Trust is considered to “hold” that information, but if the required manipulation would take a significant amount of time, the requestor should be contacted to explain that the information is not held in the manner requested, and offered the opportunity to refine their request. For example, if a request required the Trust to add up totals in a spread sheet and release the total figures, this would be information “held” by the Trust. If the Trust would have to go through a number of spread sheets and identify individual figures and provide a total, this is likely not to be information “held” by the Trust, depending on the time involved in extracting the information.

1.2 The second stage is to decide whether the information can be released, or whether one of the exemptions set out in the Act applies to the information. Common exemptions that might apply include:

- 1.2.1 Section 40 (1) – the request is for the applicants’ personal data. This must be dealt with under the subject access regime above;
- 1.2.2 Section 40 (2) – compliance with the request would involve releasing third party personal data, and this would be in breach of the DPA principles as set out above;
- 1.2.3 Section 41 – information that has been sent to the Trust (but not the Trust’s own information) which is confidential;
- 1.2.4 Section 21 – information that is already publicly available, even if payment of a fee is required to access that information;
- 1.2.5 Section 22 – information that the Trust intends to publish at a future date;
- 1.2.6 Section 43 – information that would prejudice the commercial interests of the Trust and/or a third party;
- 1.2.7 Section 38 – information that could prejudice the physical health, mental health or safety of an individual (this may apply particularly to safeguarding information);
- 1.2.8 Section 31 – information which may prejudice the effective detection and prevention of crime – such as the location of CCTV cameras;
- 1.2.9 Section 36 – information which, in the opinion of the Chair of the Trust, would prejudice the effective conduct of the Trust. There is a special form for this on the ICO’s website to assist with the obtaining of the chair’s opinion.

1.3 The sections mentioned in italics are qualified exemptions. This means that even if the exemption applies to the information, the Trust also have to carry out a public interest weighting exercise, balancing the public interest in the information being released, as against the public interest in withholding the information.

1.4 When responding to a request where the Trust has withheld some or all of the information, the Trust must explain why the information has been withheld, quoting the appropriate section number and explaining how the information requested fits within that exemption. If the public interest test has been applied, this also needs to be explained.

1.5 The letter should end by explaining to the requestor how they can complain – either by reference to an internal review by a Trustee, or by writing to the ICO.

Publication Scheme

The Trust has adopted a publication scheme that has been prepared and approved by the ICO. This publication scheme commits the Trust to make information available to the public as part of its normal business activities. The information covered is included in the classes of information mentioned below, where this information is held by the authority. Additional assistance is provided to the definition of these classes in sector specific guidance manuals issued by the ICO.

The scheme commits the Trust:

- To proactively publish or otherwise make available as a matter of routine, information, including environmental information, which is held by the Trust and falls within the classifications below.
- To specify the information which is held by the Trust and falls within the classifications below.
- To proactively publish or otherwise make available as a matter of routine, information in line with the statements contained within this scheme.
 - To produce and publish the methods by which the specific information is made routinely available so that it can be easily identified and accessed by members of the public.
 - To review and update on a regular basis the information the Trust makes available under this scheme.
 - To produce a schedule of any fees charged for access to information which is made proactively available.
 - To make this publication scheme available to the public.
 - To publish any dataset held by the Trust that has been requested, and any updated versions it holds, unless the Trust is satisfied that it is not appropriate to do so; to publish the dataset, where reasonably practicable, in an electronic form that is capable of re-use; and, if any information in the dataset is a relevant copyright work and the public

Classes of Information

Who we are and what we do:

Organisational information, locations and contacts, constitutional and legal governance.

What we spend and how we spend it:

Financial information relating to projected and actual income and expenditure, tendering, procurement and contracts.

What our priorities are and how we are doing:

Strategy and performance information, plans, assessments, inspections and reviews.

How we make decisions:

Policy proposals and decisions, decision making processes, internal criteria and procedures, consultations.

Our policies and procedures:

Current written protocols for delivering our functions and responsibilities.

Lists and registers:

Information held in registers required by law and other lists and registers relating to the functions of the Trust.

The services we offer:

Advice and guidance, booklets and leaflets, transactions and media releases. A description of the services offered.

The classes of information will not generally include:

- Information where the disclosure is prevented by law, or exempt under the Freedom of Information Act, or is otherwise properly considered to be protected from disclosure.
- Information in draft form.
- Information that is no longer readily available as it is contained in files that have been placed in archive storage, or is difficult to access for similar reasons.

The Method by which Information Published Under this Scheme will be made Available

The Trust will indicate clearly to the public what information is covered by this scheme and how it can be obtained.

Where it is within the capability of the Trust, information will be provided on a website. Where it is impracticable to make information available on a website or when an individual does not wish to access the information by the website, the Trust will indicate how information can be obtained by other means and provide it by those means.

In exceptional circumstances some information may be available only by viewing in person. Where this manner is specified, contact details will be provided. An appointment to view the information will be arranged within a reasonable timescale.

Information will be provided in the language in which it is held or in such other language that is legally required. Where the Trust is legally required to translate any information, it will do so.

Obligations under disability and discrimination legislation and any other legislation to provide information in other forms and formats will be adhered to when providing information in accordance with this scheme.

Charges which may be made for Information Published under this Scheme

The purpose of this scheme is to make the maximum amount of information readily available at minimum inconvenience and cost to the public. Charges made by the Trust for routinely published material will be justified and transparent and kept to a minimum.

Material which is published and accessed on a website will be provided free of charge.

Charges may be made for information subject to a charging regime specified by Parliament.

Charges may be made for actual disbursements incurred such as:

- photocopying
- postage and packaging
- the costs directly incurred as a result of viewing information

Charges may also be made for information provided under this scheme where they are legally authorised, they are in all the circumstances, including the general principles of the right of access to information held by public authorities, justified and are in accordance with a published schedule or schedules of fees which is readily available to the public.

Charges may also be made for making datasets (or parts of datasets) that are relevant copyright works available for re-use. These charges will be in accordance with the terms of the Re-use of Public Sector Information Regulations 2015, where they apply, or with regulations made under section 11B of the Freedom of Information Act, or with other statutory powers of the Trust.

If a charge is to be made, confirmation of the payment due will be given before the information is provided. Payment may be requested prior to provision of the information.

Written Requests

Information held by the Trust that is not published under this scheme can be requested in writing, when its provision will be considered in accordance with the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act.

Classes of Information Currently Published

Who are we, what do we do – organisational information, structures, locations and contacts.

Description	Availability HC (Hard Copy) W (Website)
Who's Who in the School/Trust	W
Members of Governance and the Basis of their Appointment	W
Funding Agreement	W
Contact Details of the Chair of the Trust, Chief Executive Officer, Heads of School and other Senior Leaders	W
School Prospectus	W
Staff Structure	W
School Session Times and Term Dates	W

What We Spend and How We Spend It – current and previous year financial information relating to projected and actual income and expenditure, procurement, contracts and financial audit

Description	Availability HC (Hard Copy) W (Website)
Annual Budget Plan and Financial Statements	HC and the Charity Commission website
Capitalised Funding	HC and the Department for Education
Additional Funding	HC
Procurement and Projects	HC
Pay Policy	HC
Staff Grading and Structure	HC

Our Priorities – strategies and plans, performance indicators, audits, inspections and reviews

Description	Availability HC (Hard Copy) W (Website)
School Profile	HC
Government Supplied Performance Data	W
Latest Ofsted Report	W
Performance Management Policy	HC
School Development Plan	HC
Safeguarding Policy	W

Decision Making – processes and records for last 3 years

Description	Availability HC (Hard Copy) W (Website)
Admissions policy and decisions (not individual decisions)	W/HC
Governance meeting agendas	HC
Governance meeting minutes (excluding information properly regarded as private to the meetings)	HC

Policies and Procedures – current written protocols, policies and procedures

Description	Availability HC (Hard Copy) W (Website)
Policies	
Charging and Remissions Policy	W
Health and Safety Policy	HC
Complaints Procedure	W
Staff Code of Conduct	HC
Discipline Policy	HC
Data Protection Policy	W
Freedom of Information Policy and Publications Scheme	W
Equal Opportunities Policy	HC
Whistleblowing Policy	W
Pupil and Curriculum Policies	
Sex Education Policy	W
Special Educational Needs Policy	W
Accessibility Policy	W
Race Equality	W
Collective Worship Policy	W
Behaviour Policy	W

Lists and Registers – currently maintained only

Description	Availability HC (Hard Copy) W (Website)
Curriculum circulars and statutory instruments	HC
Disclosure Logs	HC
Asset Register	HC

Services – services we offer including leaflets, guidance and newsletters

Description	Availability HC (Hard Copy) W (Website)
Extra-curricular activities	W
Out of school clubs	W
School Publications	W/HC
Leaflets and books	HC
Newsletters	W/HC

How to Request Information under the Freedom of Information Act

If you require hard copies of any of the documents within the Publication Scheme, please contact:

*Mrs L Simmons, Business Director and Chief Financial Officer
Unity Schools Trust, Thorpe Road, Staines upon Thames, Surrey, TW18 3HJ
Email: dataprotection@unityschoolstrust.co.uk.*

Comments and Complaints

We welcome comments and suggestions you may have about the scheme. If you want to make any comments about the publication scheme or if you require further assistance or wish to make a complaint this should be addressed to: Mrs L Simmons, Business Director and Chief Financial Officer.

If you are not satisfied with the assistance that you get or if we have not been able to resolve your complaint and you feel that a formal complaint needs to be made, then this should be addressed to the Information Commissioners Office. They can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF

Tel: 01625 545700

Web: www.informationcommissioner.gov.uk